

THE SCARLET IBIS

A Dramatic Reading

by
James Hurst



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From the story in the Atlantic Monthly.

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This cutting was made by Mr. Jack Sutton for his student, Joe Rowlette. With this reading, Mr. Rowlette won Missouri State and National Contests of the National Forensic League, 1962.

Pride, as you will find out in this selection, is a wonderful-terrible thing. James Hurst's unforgettable short story, "The Scarlet Ibis," with its poetic prose and dramatic appeal will make it a contemporary classic. Let it speak to you with its own unique simplicity and beauty.

It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been born, that the Ibis lit in the bleeding tree. The last graveyard flowers were blooming, speaking softly the names of our dead.

It's strange that all this is still so clear to me, now that summer has long since fled. A grindstone stands where the bleeding tree stood, and sometimes, like right now, as I sit in our cool parlor, the grindstone begins to turn--and I remember--Doodle.

Doodle was just about the craziest brother a boy ever had. He was born when I was six and was, from the outset, a disappointment. He seemed all head, and everyone thought he was going to die--but somehow he didn't.

Mama and Daddy named him William Armstrong; but such a name sounds good only on a tombstone.

When he finally learned to crawl, he always crawled backward just like a doodlebug, so I began to call him Doodle, and I guess renaming my brother was the kindest thing I ever did for him. Nobody expects much from someone called Doodle.

Although Doodle learned to crawl, he showed no signs of walking. Daddy built him a go-cart and I had to pull him around wherever I went. If I so much as picked up my cap, he'd start crying to go with me and Mama would call, "Take Doodle with you."

When Doodle was five years old, I was embarrassed at having a brother of that age who couldn't walk, so I set out to teach him, down in Old Woman Swamp.

"I'm gonna teach you to walk, Doodle."

"Why?"

"So I won't have to haul you around all the time."

"I can't walk, Brother."

"Who says so?"

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---